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CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

CONFIDENTIAL ANNEX

TO

C.O.S.(61)45TH MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, 18TH JULY, 1961

2. BERLIN CONTINGENCY PLANNING

(Previous Reference: C.O.S.(61)43rd Meeting, Minute 3)

A. J.P.(61)82(Final)

THE COMMITTEE considered a report by the Joint Planning Staff setting out the United Kingdom views on the various Live Oak plans in the form of a brief for the use of the Military Representative at future tripartite and quadripartite meetings on Berlin Contingency Planning.

LORD MOUNTBATTEN said that the Committee would have seen from various Foreign Office telegrams* that meetings between the United States, United Kingdom, French and German Foreign Ministers were to take place in Paris between 4th and 8th August, 1961, and that military representatives were to participate in these discussions. The Committee had previously agreed that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff should represent them at such talks. He suggested, however, that should the United States not be represented by one of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it would be preferable if the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff attended in his place. He believed that the report before them would serve as a satisfactory brief for either the Chief of the Imperial General Staff or the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff; but he recommended that it should be read against the background of the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the various plans, which he invited Sir George Mills to explain.

* Foreign Office to Washington Nos. 4870, 4871
Washington to Foreign Office Nos. 1171, 1734, 1739

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SIR GEORGE MILLS (Chairman, British Defence Staffs, Washington) said that the problem of autobahn access must be seen in its true perspective as a small part of the broad canvas of military, political and economic measures which might be applied during a period of mounting crisis; it would be wrong to judge the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff views on land operations in isolation. The United States Joint Chiefs of Staff had made it quite clear to him that they fully appreciated that both the battalion and larger scale operations were militarily unsound; he also understood that they had informed the State Department that, in their view, autobahn access could not be restored by measures short of all-out war. Nevertheless, they were under an obligation to propose military action, and it was in fulfillment of this obligation that they had put forward General Norstad's plans for FREE STYLE, TRADE WIND and the divisional operation, which they considered to be the best military solutions short of fighting all-out war. They felt that it would not be realistic to jump straight from the probe to nuclear war, and they regarded successive operations on an increasing scale as a method of proving allied determination. Finally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff constantly reiterated that the Western allies had rights of access to Berlin by both land and air, and they felt that if they were to take no action on land, in the event of obstruction, but to proceed straight to an airlift, they would thereby be surrendering their land access rights.

In discussion the following points were made:-

- (a) Whether or not we should try to maintain our rights of access by land, and whether these could be deemed to be surrendered by recourse to an airlift, was a political matter which was outside the competence of the Chiefs of Staff.
- (b) If the sole aim of land operations was to compel the Russians to be the first to resort to military force, then the size of the force used was irrelevant, for the aim could be as well achieved by a company as by a division.
- (c) It was understood that Brigadier General Richardson, the temporary United States Chief of Live Oak Staff, had put forward the theory that it would be wrong to proceed direct to all-out war without suitable graduated escalation. Militarily this theory made less sense even than the plans for road access. Whether or not it was acceptable politically to proceed from a small beginning direct to war without intervening steps was a political decision to be taken by Governments in the light of the success of other political and economic counter-measures.
- (d) The crux of military operations lay in the Russian determination to deny access; if they were firm they would be able to stop a division or a greater force. Apart from the fact that it was militarily unsound to misuse military formations in the way that the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff had in mind for the divisional operation, NATO land forces were not strong enough to be able to afford the loss of one or more divisions.

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In addition, it would gravely interfere with the later implementation of NATO war plans, should the crisis escalate to war, if we had first to commit our forces tripartitely in the ways suggested by Live Oak.

THE COMMITTEE:-

- (1) Approved the report by the Joint Planning Staff and authorised its use by the United Kingdom Military Representative at the forthcoming meetings in Paris.
- (2) Instructed the Secretary to send a copy to the United Kingdom National Military Representative, SHAPE, for use as a brief by Major-General Baker.
- (3) Took note of the provisional arrangements for the Conference*.

* Foreign Office to Washington Telegrams Nos. 4870 and 4871
Washington to Foreign Office Telegrams Nos. 1171, 1734 and 1739

B. Live Oak Studies

THE COMMITTEE had before them a Minute⁺ by the Secretary covering two memoranda by Brigadier General Richardson, the temporary Chief of Staff to Live Oak, on future studies to be undertaken in the Live Oak group.

LORD MOUNTBATTEN recalled that the Committee had not informed^o General Norstad whether they agreed to his proposals³ that Live Oak should act as an operating staff to implement any of the Berlin Contingency Plans, should this be necessary, but had confined their reply to informing General Norstad of the appointment of Major General Baker as Chief of Staff; and of their agreement to a German Liaison Officer being included in Live Oak. It would be for Ministers to decide whether Berlin Contingency Plans should be implemented by Live Oak rather than through the normal NATO chain of command; it would first be necessary to obtain further details of the requirement. This information would emerge from studies 1(a) and 1(b) in Brigadier General Richardson's memorandum.

In discussion the point was made:-

- (e) It would be most difficult, in the present manpower situation, to provide any large increase in the Live Oak staff; this would particularly apply to signals specialists.

THE COMMITTEE:-

- (4) Agreed with the views of the Chief of the Defence Staff.
- (5) Instructed Major General Baker to take note of their views.

+ COS.876/17/7/61
o COS.850/12/7/61
* Annex A to COS.613/4/7/61

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